

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 074997

GENEVA FOR RICHARDSON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PLOS, UR, US

SUBJECT: NOTE FROM USSR ON CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN

1. ON MARCH 18, SOVIET EMBASSY MINISTER-COUNSELOR
BESSMERTNYKH HANDED FOLLOWING NOTE TO AMBASSADOR MARSHALL
SHULMAN.

QUOTE: AS IS KNOWN, DIFFICULTIES HAVE ARISEN IN REGARD TO
THE QUESTION OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE U.N. CONFERENCE ON THE
LAW OF THE SEA, THE SEVENTH SESSION OF WHICH WILL OPEN IN
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GENEVA ON MARCH 28, 1978, DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE PRESENT
CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE, MR. AMERASINGHE (SRI LANKA),
WILL GIVE UP HIS DUTIES AS HEAD OF THE SRI LANKA DELEGATION
TO THE CONFERENCE ON MARCH 18, 1978.

SHOULD AMERASINGHE BE INCLUDED AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE SRI
LANKA DELEGATION TO THE CONFERENCE, THE USSR IS PREPARED TO

SUPPORT A PROPOSAL THAT HE CONTINUE TO OCCUPY THE POST OF CHAIRMAN.

IF, HOWEVER, THE QUESTION OF A NEW CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN ARISES, THE SOVIET SIDE BELIEVES THAT A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ASIAN GROUP SHOULD AGAIN BE ELECTED TO THE POST OF CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN, AND WOULD BE PREPARED TO GIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION TO POSSIBLE CANDIDACIES FROM THIS GROUP. SUCH A SOLUTION WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO AVOID DISRUPTING THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP AND THE LENGTHY DEBATES THIS WOULD ENTAIL.

IN THE U.N. CIRCLES INVOLVED IN THE CONFERENCE, ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE FOR RESOLVING THE QUESTION OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP IS ALSO BEING DISCUSSED AT THIS TIME, NAMELY, NOT TO ELECT A NEW CHAIRMAN, BUT TO INSTRUCT THE CHAIRMEN OF THE PRINCIPAL COMMITTEES AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE TO TAKE TURNS SERVING AS CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN; THIS EVIDENTLY WOULD ALSO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO AVOID LENGTHY DISCUSSIONS AND THE GREAT LOSS OF TIME THIS WOULD INVOLVE. IN THAT CASE, THE SOVIET SIDE BELIEVES THAT A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ASIAN GROUP SHOULD BE ELECTED TO THE POST OF CHAIRMAN OF THE FOURTH COMMITTEE (ON THE SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES), WHICH WILL EVIDENTLY BE CREATED AT THE SEVENTH SESSION.

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WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THE US SIDE'S VIEW ON WAYS TO RESOLVE THE QUESTION OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE U.N. CONFERENCE ON THE LAW OF THE SEA, INCLUDING RESOLVING IT BY ENTRUSTING THESE FUNCTIONS TO THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN. IF THE ASIAN GROUP IS IN FAVOR OF THIS SOLUTION, AND THE OTHER REGIONAL GROUPS DO NOT OBJECT TO IT, THE USSR COULD ALSO SUPPORT IT. END QUOTE.

2. DEPARTMENT ASSUMES THAT AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON IS DISCUSSING THIS QUESTION WITH KOLOSOVSKY IN GENEVA. WE THEREFORE DO NOT INTEND TO MAKE ANY FORMAL RESPONSE TO SOVIET NOTE. VANCE

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